



THE STRANGE WAYS OF GOD

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THE
STRANGE WAYS OF GOD

A Study in the Book of Job

BY
CHARLES REYNOLDS BROWN

*"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ;
But now mine eye seeth thee."*



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PREFACE

THIS little book is not in any sense a commentary upon or a critical exposition of the book of *Job*. The larger part of the material was originally used in a series of lectures intended for a popular audience and designed to increase the interest in, and to aid in a better understanding of this ancient poem.

The literary quality of the book of *Job* is such as to give it a high place among the world's masterpieces, but the many faulty translations in the Authorized Version, the ill-considered arrangement of the parts of the poem as to their literary form in an ordinary copy of the Scriptures, and a widespread misconception as to the main purpose of the argument, have tended to obscure its beauty.

In the main I have used the translation given in the Revised Version and the literary arrangement found in Moulton's *Modern Reader's Bible*. Here and there, however, I have used my own paraphrase where it seemed to me the essential meaning could be more clearly rendered. I have occasionally quoted together lines which stand apart in the text, without the insertion of the customary marks, but in this I am sure no violence has been done at any point to the author's meaning, nor has the essential course of his argument been in any wise disturbed.

I freely confess my indebtedness to Prof. John F. Genung's *The Epic of the Inner Life*, as well as to

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Watson's volume on *Job*, and to Davidson's *Job* in the Cambridge Bible.

I have written these pages in the hope that they might increase the interest of all lovers of good literature in the frequently neglected poem, and aid in bringing out more clearly its teachings, which in my judgment have special value for the times on which we have fallen.

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The
Strange Ways of God



I. THE POINT OF VIEW

T HE book of Job has stood for generations as one of the great dramas of doubt. The quality and source of the doubt give the book special interest to practical minds in that it takes up, not those speculative inquiries which are spun out by cloistered schoolmen sitting comfortably apart from the strain and stress of actual experience, but rather the vital problems of ordinary people. The prevailing faith of the day is challenged by the hard lot which fell to a flesh-and-blood man. We find a certain man of unblemished integrity in the full enjoyment of health, property, family joy, and a life of kindly usefulness, brought to the point where he feels the foundations slipping from under him because of terrible misfortunes which the God of righteousness allows to fall upon his home of peace. It is, therefore, not a clever contest between two hair-splitting theories, but the battle of warm faith with hard facts, that we find portrayed in the book of Job.

It is at this very point that the busy people of the world to-day most commonly find themselves puzzled. In their minds the real debate is not over the fine points of this particular dogma or of that; it deals

with something more fundamental and vital. They listen on Sunday to the warm assurances of faith put forth from the pulpits of the land, — a God who knows that we have need of all the things that are demanded for joyous and useful existence; a Friend who does not suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice; a Father who is more ready to hear and answer the prayerful appeals of his people than earthly fathers are to give bread to their children; an All-embracing Providence whose affectionate interest in our well-being counts the very hairs of our heads! Then on Monday morning they go out into the world — not some imaginary world as men have agreed together to picture it to themselves, but the real world as it is. They rub against the unplanned side of it and find it rough, full of knots and splinters. They are torn and bruised by the contact; or, if happily they themselves escape for a time, they painfully witness the discomfiture of their less fortunate fellows. They ponder the apparent discrepancies between the theories of the pulpit and the facts which face them. It need not be said that in general they hold firmly to the facts while oftentimes their faith in the theories slips entirely away. All such serious, observant, puzzled, and frankly rational men will be interested in those pages of Hebrew literature, where the same old battle of belief was fought out in the land of Uz.

This book is commonly regarded, not as literal history, but as a dramatic poem. There may have been some historical basis for the story, as there was for the plays of Hamlet and Macbeth. Two writers of Scripture, Ezekiel and James, refer in passing to a

man named "Job." Some good man bearing that name may indeed have suffered extraordinary misfortune, but the treatment of the material is literary, poetic, dramatic. In the four great calamities which fell upon the hero of the story, one servant, and only one escaped on each occasion to report the event. The occurrences of actual life do not commonly repeat themselves with such mathematical exactness. When Job regained his property he had exactly twice as many sheep, oxen, camels, and asses as before his misfortunes. In the second family he reared, he had exactly the same number of children as in the first, and the sexes were in precisely the same proportion, seven sons and three daughters, an arrangement highly acceptable to the Oriental heart. All this is good literary form, but in the regaining of property, and in the rearing of a second family, actual history does not usually follow so strictly an arithmetical plan in order to reach a striking climax. All these items have the artificial look which belongs to the deliberate arrangement of materials for dramatic effect.

This book, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, belongs to what is called the "Wisdom Literature" of the Bible, which stands as the nearest approach made by the Hebrews to a moral philosophy such as we find among the Greeks and in modern nations. The wisdom literature in its method and spirit lies quite apart from the Law and the Prophets. In this book of Job no appeal is made to the Law of Moses, nor is there any "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophet. No mention is made of any of the sacred writings of the


Hebrews, although many of them were current when the book of Job was written. No reference is made in the argument to the annals of Hebrew history — the tradition of the deluge, the destruction of the cities of the Plain, the plagues of Egypt, or the deliverance from bondage, which were supposed to exhibit and illustrate the dealings of God with men. The discussion is carried on entirely apart from law or prophecy, purely in the light of moral reason. The authors of this Wisdom Literature fell back upon experience and upon those considerations which the universal moral judgment tends to recognize and approve. They were really “the Humanists of the Bible.”

The discussion is not carried on in the Temple, nor in the halls of learning, but out in the open air. The ash-heap or dumping-ground outside the city, where Job's leprosy compelled him to go, became the scene of the debate. The background or setting of the drama is therefore that of external nature. The furnishings of the Temple, the ritualism of the priests, the well-worn copies of the sacred manuscripts used by the scribes, are nowhere in sight. Out under the broad sky we see the robber bands hovering on the edges of prosperous society and making their attack upon Job's flocks. We see the lightning destroying his sheep, the cyclone destroying his house, thus killing all his children. We see gathering upon the horizon the second mighty storm out of whose whirlwind the voice of Jehovah speaks. The argument throughout is carried on apart from any light cast by the special-experiences of the Hebrew people as recorded

in their Scriptures; the point of view is that of the outdoor life which seeks to interpret the ways of God by ordinary human experience, and by the cosmic processes which enfold it.

The Hebrew race developed no theater as did the Greeks and other ancient races. To this day, in the city of Jerusalem there is no theater, public hall, or other places of general amusement, although it is a city of more than fifty thousand inhabitants. The major study of the Hebrews was religion — the being of God, the unseen spiritual order, the fortunes and destiny of the soul. The book of Job therefore lacks many of the features that we ordinarily associate with dramatic presentation. Aside from a brief prologue, and a still briefer epilogue, it is simply a debate between five men, concluded by an utterance from a supernatural voice which issued out of a whirlwind. The usual action and stage play are entirely wanting in that portion, which forms nine-tenths of the book. All this is in harmony with the Hebrew habit of mind. For them the great scene of action was within the soul, where men wrestled with the everlasting mystery of undeserved suffering in a world professedly ruled by justice and benevolence. The book of Job has well been called "The Epic of the Inner Life," for the scene of action lies in those deeper processes of mind and heart as they engage with the problem of religious faith.

II. THE SHOCK OF UNEXPLAINED ADVERSITY

 HE story opens with a charming picture of the piety and the prosperity of the hero. These two facts are named together, for according to the earlier conviction of the Hebrew they were inevitably associated as cause and effect. The whole message of the book of Deuteronomy, which stands as a kind of résumé of the position of Hebrew faith up to the time of Josiah and beyond, is summed up in these words: "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do." Men who served God were encouraged to believe that health and riches, family happiness, and a peaceful old age, would inevitably fall to their lot.

This gracious promise does, indeed, point toward a certain truth, but not toward all the truth. It is a broad generalization which does not provide for all phases of human experience, and it leaves unprotected the weak spot in the Old Testament theology, the question of motive. But that weak spot had not been discovered by Job or by his friends, and therefore his piety and his prosperity are brought before us as natural parts of one harmonious whole.

It is indeed a lovely picture ! There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, a sound, straight, God-fearing, and evil-hating man. He was

the richest of all the sons of the East, as we see in the author's inventory of Job's property. He rejoiced in ten children, seven of them — "Blessed be the name of the Lord," he would have said — being sons. He practised a simple, unaffected piety, and as a true patriarch exercised a certain priesthood on behalf of his family. "They are good children," he seemed to say, "but in their feasting" (in that joyous social life which belongs to youth) "it may be that they have forgotten God and sinned in their hearts." So he rose up early in the morning, and after the custom of the time, offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all, and sanctified them by the atmosphere of devotion he maintained in his home. "Thus did Job continually," the author says as he finishes his picture, for worthy conduct was not something to which his hero occasionally turned aside in a spurt of devotion — the habit of his life was righteousness, godliness, usefulness.

Is there in literature a finer portrayal of noble character than in this passage where Job calls upon his acquaintances to bear witness to the life he has lived, or to bring accusation against him if they can?

"I put on righteousness and it clothed itself with me!
I was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame,
And a father to the needy.
I delivered the poor when he cried,
The orphan and him that had no helper;
And the cause that I knew not, I searched out.

"If I have walked in vanity
Or my foot has hastened to deceit;

If my step has turned out of the way
Or if any spot has cleaved to my hands;
If I despised the cause of my man servant
Or my maid servant when they contended with me;
If I rejoiced because my wealth was great,
Or if mine heart has been enticed by a woman;
If I have withheld the poor from their desire
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
Then let my shoulder fall from my shoulder blade
And mine arm be broken from the bone!
Let me be weighed in an even balance,
That God may know mine integrity."

And this noble picture drawn by the author as Job's challenge to his accusers is further confirmed by supernatural testimony. The voice from heaven challenges the world:

"Hast thou considered my servant Job?
That there is none like him in the earth,
A sound, straight, God-fearing, evil-hating man?"

This corroborative testimony as to the genuineness of his piety is brought before us in advance, to the end that when suffering, severe and unprecedented, falls upon him, we may know how undeserved it is. Here stands this good man in the enjoyment of such health and property, family joy, and universal esteem, as would appropriately belong to one whose piety was so deep and real.

We then come to an account of the trial decided upon in heaven. The author allows his readers to see what Job and his friends did not see. We look into an upper region where certain transactions and

determinations affecting mortal men were taking shape, but of which these people on earth were as yet all unaware. There was a day when the sons of God, the servants and agents of the divine purpose in the moral administration of the world, came to present themselves before the Lord. The "Adversary" came also among them. The literary associations of the word "Satan," largely through the use of it in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, have carried it far from the meaning of the original term here used by the author. The "Adversary" was not a fallen being full of malignity, hatefully opposing himself to the Divine Will. He was one of "the sons of God," dutifully presenting himself with the others. He was the cautious, critical, discriminating member of the cabinet. He held the office of "Advocatus Diaboli," the one employed of old by the Roman Catholic Church when the question of canonizing a saint came up, to critically weigh, test, and scrutinize the candidate, lest some flaw which would unfit him for sainthood might perchance be overlooked. The "Adversary" was, therefore, a trusted Inspector with good standing and a place of usefulness among the sons of God.

This official has been going to and fro in the earth, critically studying the moral processes at work, and scrutinizing the results attained. On his return, the Lord of moral values offers the customary challenge, "Hast thou considered my servant Job that there is none like him in the earth?" Then the cautious Inspector, whose office it is to see that the moral administration of the universe is not imposed

upon, fixes upon that weak spot in Old Testament piety, the question of motive. He expresses his doubt as to the possibility of disinterested goodness under the system of rewards believed in by the ethical leaders of that day. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" he replies. "Is he not well paid for it; and may it not be that he is doing it for pay?" "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, . . . and about all that he hath? His work is blessed, his substance is increased, and his loved ones are all about him. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Here was the tender spot! The prevailing sentiment of the period was that righteousness would bring health, riches, long life, and family joy; if these failed then faith faltered. How often did Hebrew faith perish utterly in the face of adversity! When the Hebrew capital was taken by the enemy, and the Jews were carried off into Babylonian captivity, it meant an end of everything to many a soul; only a remnant ever cared to return and to resume their historic cult. Only a few rare spirits like Jeremiah and the author of the second part of Isaiah could see that One apparently despised and rejected by the march of events, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, might be fulfilling a higher moral function through his vicarious suffering, than those who lived on happily in the full tide of prosperity. And in the time of Christ, Peter, steeped in Judaism, voiced the same feeling when he said, in effect, to his Master, "We are all good men; we have

forsaken all and followed thee; we are clearly entitled to great reward; what shall we have therefore?"

Do men serve God for naught? Are they righteous apart from the consideration of the pay involved? It is certain that many of the Hebrews were not; their eye was on the pay. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God"—thus spoke the Hebrew patriarch of old! The disposition to have the terms and conditions of conscientious living all arranged in advance was widely prevalent in the Hebrew religion. The Adversary fixes upon the weak spot in the theological system of that period, and the author with genuine insight thus attacks the current orthodoxy of his day from the very side where it finally broke down.

The trial is therefore decided upon in heaven as a necessary part of the moral administration of the world. The Adversary is given permission to take away, by a series of calamities, all of Job's property, his children and his health; and with these would inevitably go the esteem and confidence of his friends, who, by the demands of their system, would be forced to conclude that such extraordinary misfortune pointed to some secret evil in his life. And this would inevitably raise the question in Job's mind, as adversity has raised it in the minds of countless thousands, whether or no we can trust God, whether we can continue to believe in his justice and benevolence. Job did not know of the

trial decided upon in the unseen world, as we ourselves know not the purport of much of the suffering that falls suddenly and terribly into our own lives; the very incompleteness of his knowledge would thus add to the confusion of his faith in the presence of disaster so wide-spread.

And the other question would also be raised, — Can God trust men? Are men righteous for pay, or do they serve God because it is right? Is there a righteousness that turns to God as the needle to the pole, regardless of outward circumstances, of comfort or discomfort, of happiness or misery? Both these questions would come into the great debate, “Can men trust God?” “Can God trust men?” The severest trial would indeed be warranted if some satisfactory answer to these fundamental inquiries might result. Permission is therefore given for such a trial. The Lord said to the Adversary, He is in thine hand; only save his life. And the Adversary went forth from the presence of the Lord.

We come next to the scene where the trial is inflicted. This too is a dramatic picture. Job was in the city, sitting, as he was wont, at the public gate in friendly converse with those who held him in high esteem. His heart was full of that sweet content which clothes the man who is healthy, prosperous, happy, and useful. Suddenly one of his servants came running in, out of breath, trembling with the evil news he brought. “The Sabeans fell upon the oxen and the asses,” he cried, “and carried them away; and the servants are slain with the edge of

the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Before he had finished, another servant came running in, shouting, "The Chaldeans, three bands of them, fell upon the camels; and the servants are slain, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." While he was yet speaking another came hurrying up, and cried, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." And in the twinkling of an eye yet another servant, paler than the rest and more excited, came with his direful story: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Smitten he was by these terrible reports, but he bravely steadied himself like a Sequoia in the face of a storm! He stood and rent his garments as Orientals do in time of sore distress. He bowed himself before the Lord and prayed, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return!" Property gone, children all dead, his own bare manhood seemed to be all that was left! And presently he added, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Here follows a long pause, not as though a comma or a semicolon interposed, but the pause demanded by the stalwart figure of a stricken man, bowing himself, steadying himself, leaning upon an everlasting arm — and then at

last his word of trust, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.

But the worst was yet to come! He was smitten with one of the most painful forms of leprosy. Ugly, loathsome, running sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head! Poor, childless, diseased, he went out from the abode of men, according to the hard custom of the time, and sat down among the ashes!

Here in his wretchedness his wife came to him. We find a touch of grim humor and of fine art in the fact that the author spared her life; the whirlwind which killed the ten children left her unhurt. She had a part to play in the further trial of Job's spirit. The Oriental woman is not supposed to have any considerable appreciation for religious truth — in certain quarters she is even denied a soul. It was fitting therefore that the author should put upon her uninstructed lips what even the Adversary might have hesitated to say. She came to Job in the hour of his affliction and, with cruel taunt, upbraided him for his pious faith: "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Curse God, and die." But the answer of the sorely tried man is tender, considerate, without a hint of impatience: "What? Thou speakest as one of the godless women speaketh. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job sinned not with his lips.

There you have the situation. A rich man suddenly reduced to poverty — poverty which has made

many men bitter, reckless, rebellious. In prosperity they were pious; they knew how to abound. When the property went, the piety went; they had not learned how to be abased.

Job's children were all dead. And at the sight of such a picture the mind hurries away to the remembrance of some frantic parent pleading for the life of a child, but growing hard, rebellious, unbelieving when the request fails. The knee, stiffened by disappointment, would no longer bend in prayer!

Job's wife turned against him. And there rises before our minds a picture of those men who throw themselves away in unworthy associations and in unloving indifference, in drink and in hidden licentiousness, because the womanly sympathy, to which they naturally turned in the hour of need, was cruelly withheld!

Job's health was destroyed by leprosy. "Put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face," the Adversary had said. When the head throbs, and the nerves lie all exposed, and the body is racked with pain; when weariness and disgust fasten upon the life because of dragging, failing health, then it is that the will so frequently goes lame and moral failure comes. "Months of emptiness and wearisome nights are appointed to me," he said. But through it all, complete ruin though it seemed, Job bore himself as a hero. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," — bare manhood indeed was all that was now left, — yet, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

THE STRANGE WAYS OF GOD


In it all, the most painful thought, perhaps, was the apparent lack of any meaning or purpose. Why? why? why? "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" baffled, suffering, desperate humanity has been asking all down the ages. If a wise and good God is in control, why this unspeakable suffering, which is not always the consequence of personal transgression? Famines and floods, scourges of drought and plagues of disease! Why has Beneficence made such a world — a world thus controlled, or (dare we say it) uncontrolled? Into the joy of carefully gained well-being comes the crash of unexplained adversity, and we have upon our hands the conflict of faith with facts.

Thus Job of old sat in silence and pondered the situation. Why? why? why? "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass; He hath set darkness in my paths."

Then silently across the sand of the desert and out of the darkness, came three men from a far country. Emirs they were, princes of that Oriental world, who having heard of the affliction of their friend had journeyed across the sands to visit him. When they saw the distress which sat visibly upon his stricken figure they hardly knew him! But in decorous fashion they rent their garments and sprinkled dust upon their heads, observing all the forms of sympathetic grief.

"So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great."

III. THE FAILURE OF CONVENTIONAL ORTHODOXY

 HERE upon the ash-heap Job sat, plunged in the deepest melancholy. His property was gone; his children were all dead; his wife had deserted him; his body was sick and sore. In the face of misfortune so dire, we are not surprised to hear him open his lips and curse the day that he was born. There seemed to be a total lack of significance in it all. "What does the Almighty mean?" he asked. He was confident that he was not being punished for wrong-doing — he felt that he was a good man; and that he was not self-deceived we know, for to his righteousness God himself had borne testimony. Yet here he lay smitten with adversity unspeakable. We sympathize with him as he sobs out,

"I cry for help, but there is no justice.
He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
He hath set darkness in my paths."

But out of the darkness had come three visitors from afar. Friends and associates they were of long standing, who having heard of Job's misfortune had come to see him. And when they saw him they were amazed beyond expression. They rent their gar-

ments and sprinkled dust upon their heads; they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, silent, thoughtful, bewildered by the fact that such calamities had fallen upon so good a man. None of them ventured a word, for they saw that his grief was very great.

The author, too much of an artist to picture these friends as mere obstinate, foolish bigots, making themselves instantly offensive, portrays them in the early stages of the debate as well-bred, polite, and kindly, so far as adherence to their hard and fast theological system allowed. They exhibited delicacy of feeling in silently, sympathetically waiting for Job to utter the first word. Their presence, their bearing, their rent garments, all testified to their deep feeling and made words superfluous. Those thoughtless people who rush in upon sufferers, chatter a few empty commonplaces, toss them a few scraps of hackneyed commiseration, and then hastily scamper off to their own concerns, might read with profit the account of this approach to the abode of sorrow, as made by these high-minded, sympathetic Orientals.

But as the three friends meditated upon the situation for an entire week, a horrible suspicion gradually fastened itself upon their minds. Remember their point of view: theological propositions were fixed, exact, final, without exceptions, and explaining everything. These men made syllogisms their meat and drink. They tried to deal with the warm, throbbing, and varied facts of life as logicians do. "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do

them, that ye may prosper," was to them an incontrovertible proposition. It was certain that God would measure out health and prosperity, family joy, and abiding success in exact proportion to the degree of piety; and he would deal out adversity in exact proportion to the degree of wickedness. They no more doubted the truth of that proposition than they doubted their own existence; yet somehow when they came to apply it to the facts before them, there seemed to be a hitch somewhere — unless indeed the piety of their friend was spurious. And in the futile effort to reconcile their preconceived theories with admitted facts, we find the failure of the conventional orthodoxy of that day.

The current creed maintained that piety pays large dividends of earthly prosperity here and now, without exception or interruption. This is the theological theory put forward with hearty confidence in the book of Deuteronomy; it is brought out as a "Thus saith the Lord." The same doctrine is serenely confirmed by the author of the Proverbs from experience, observation, and the considerations of moral reason. But in the book of Job it is openly questioned, and in the book of Ecclesiastes it is, by a later skepticism, flatly denied. It was, however, the unquestioned belief of Job's friends and of Job himself. Let a man delight himself in the law of the Lord and he will be like a tree planted by the river of water; he will bring forth fruit in his season, his leaf shall not wither; and whatsoever he may do, will prosper. This was accepted as an exact, universal, and fixed proposition.

And the converse of this was held; adversity was uniformly regarded as the penalty for wrong-doing. Sickness, sorrow, loss of property, or the death of one's children, meant always that the sufferers were receiving their just deserts for some transgression. The tough persistence of this conviction was marvelous. As late as the time of Christ it was felt that the men on whom the badly built Tower of Siloam fell must in some way have been sinners above all the men in Jerusalem. In the presence of pitiable blindness we hear the disciples saying: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" And when Paul at Malta, escaping from shipwreck, was attacked by a viper, the natives said among themselves: "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped from the sea, yet Justice hath not suffered to live." This was the unchallenged belief for centuries.

Thus when the three friends sat and pondered Job's situation for that whole week, this suspicion forced itself upon them: "He was not so good a man as we supposed. He must have been secretly violating the terms of the covenant. His leaf has withered, and that which he was doing has not prospered; and therefore his delight could not have been in the law of the Lord. He must have been in the habit of turning aside to some secret transgression." They were driven to this conclusion by the demands of their theological system, and they were compelled to believe that Job must have been wicked to an extraordinary degree, since such unprecedented adversity had fallen upon him.

CONVENTIONAL ORTHODOXY

It was a delicate matter to suggest such a thought to him, and Eliphaz, apparently the eldest of the three, offers the first word:

“If one assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?
But who can withhold himself from speaking?
Behold, thou hast instructed many.
But now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest.

“Is not thy fear of God thy confidence,
And thy hope the integrity of thy ways?
Who ever perished, being innocent?
Or where were the upright cut off?
According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
And sow trouble, reap the same.
As for me, I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I commit my cause.”

Then Bildad takes up the same strain:

“Doth God pervert judgment?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
If thy children have sinned against him,
Then he hath delivered them into the hand of their
transgression:
If thou wert pure and upright;
Surely now he would awake for thee,
And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.
Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,
Neither will he uphold the evil-doers.”

Eliphaz had spoken first as the eldest of the three, for the common feeling was that “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.” He

spoke mainly from experience, from 'the things that he had seen.' Then came Bildad, who made the traditions of the elders his main reliance, applying ruthlessly "that which their fathers have searched out: for we are but of yesterday." Then Zophar, less considerate than the others, blunt, hard, quick, burst out at the close of Job's reply:

"Oh that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee.
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine
iniquity deserveth."

In these brief extracts we have the gist of all that the three theologians had to say. They were advocates of a fixed system, and their minds were compelled to run in a narrow groove. Since God is just, good men must prosper. Job has not prospered, therefore he cannot have been a good man. So they reasoned and so they spoke. As the debate went on, their minds became heated by the clash of opinions; the suggestion as to possible fault on Job's part led to open insinuation, and insinuation to strong and bitter accusation. Their tempers gradually rose until Zophar at least was openly abusive. These men actually came to the point where they felt that resistance to their theory was resistance to God. They finally reached that state of feeling where they burst into a fierce denunciation of the patient sufferer for his steadfast adherence to facts, as if in some way he were guilty of actual blasphemy.

Respectable and conventional orthodoxy rests al-

ways upon certain truths and has genuine value, otherwise it would never have become respectable and conventional. A prominent Englishman, once asked by a Non-conformist why he supported the Established Church, replied: "I support it because it is established; establish your church and I will support that." He was conscious of the fact that any system of belief or worship must have real value in order to win the consent and support of serious people to such an extent as to become established. And all this was as true in the days of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar as in the days of the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Westminster Confession. Respectable orthodoxy must have elements of strength in it in order to attain such position.

This ancient orthodoxy failed because of its inability or unwillingness to affirm great principles and general tendencies, and yet make room within the system for possible exceptions, modifications, things not understood as yet; in a word, it left no room for adjustment and growth. As a general principle it is true that good men prosper and evil men suffer in material well-being as well as on those higher levels where character is won or lost. But one cannot press this as a hard and fast statement applicable in every case or it will collapse under the stress of certain untoward experiences.

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, a sound, straight, God-fearing, evil-hating man, but somehow sore adversity fell to his lot. There was a man in the land of New York whose name was George E. Waring, a sound, straight, God-

fearing, evil-hating man, whose integrity, public spirit, unselfish generosity were a benediction to his city and to his state. The land could ill afford to lose a man so real, but in the heroic discharge of his duty he was smitten with disease and died before his time! At the same hour there was also in the land of New York a man whose name has become a by-word for political corruption, mean, selfish, noxious, building up without visible business a fortune to be spent on the race-tracks of Europe, a menace to his city, to his state, and to the nation. How well the land could have afforded to lose him, yet he lived on, healthy, strong, influential, and prosperous! Great principles and general tendencies seem to be subject to modification at the hands of special sets of circumstances. And this is well, for it is true that "the world becomes not less, but more ideal, where the providential system of government gives room for principles other than retributive. Moral elevation implies moral choice. But if the connection between character and fate were immutable — if righteousness necessarily and inevitably brought reward, and guilt necessarily and inevitably ruin, — then in so mechanical a life men would be forever choosing between prosperity and adversity, while there would be no opportunity for the higher choice between right and wrong."

The failure of the current orthodoxy of that day was not in the single case of Job, but in its whole method and line of approach. Having built up a theory which pointed to a part of the truth, it became hard, impervious, indifferent to new facts. When

collision came between the formula and the fact, it squirmed and tried to explain away or deny the fact; in some way the system must be guarded intact. The refusal of the inductive method which proceeds from facts to general principles, the habit of holding to fixed *a priori* systems and concealing or twisting facts to meet the emergencies which arise, will of necessity bring defeat to the cause of Him who says, "I am the truth." The systems come and go — "all little systems have their day, they have their day and cease to be" — and our only permanent safety lies in the determination to see things as they are, to call them by their right names, to be loyal ever to the leadership of facts, and to be open to the necessity for readjustment in our theories as further knowledge comes.

Job's friends were confronting an actual situation with a hard and fast theory — good men must prosper, bad men and only bad men must suffer; but somehow the theory was in conflict with the facts. To this day the same suicidal course is followed here and there. The claim is sometimes made that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and that inasmuch as God would not give us anything but an infallible revelation of himself, the Bible must be infallible. But when men begin to study the Bible, they find that it is not in every line infallible; the scientific ideas expressed are sometimes those of an earlier period rather than the final word of actual investigation; the same events are recorded in accounts which vary in many details; a moral conception stated sometimes as a "Thus saith the Lord" is on a lower level

than the expressed mind of Christ, and represents an immature state of moral development. The whole revelation lies imbedded in a genuinely historical process, where men of like passions with us speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, giving us the heavenly treasure of the divine truth they saw in the earthen vessels of their own particular experience. The theory that the Bible is absolutely infallible breaks down in the presence of certain scientific, historic, and moral references. But the books of the Bible, when rightly viewed and justly interpreted, remain a revelation which in all its great principles is perfectly adapted for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, able to make men wise unto salvation and furnish them thoroughly for all good work.

The same method is necessary in deciding upon the efficacy of prayer, in molding our doctrine of providence, in determining our beliefs on many important points. Many hard and fast theories have been going down before the majesty of fact. But the inductive method, proceeding from the ascertained truths of spiritual experience to the real implications of those truths as expressed in general principles, is ever the pathway to security and peace. If the religion of Jesus Christ could not stand rigorous research, free inquiry, unhesitating loyalty to facts, such as science and history, economics and ethics are compelled to stand, it would be doomed. But in the judgment of those who are its most intelligent advocates, it can stand them and is standing them.

In such inductive study all the facts of experience must have a hearing. Conscience, aspiration, the feeling of guilt, the joy of deliverance, the sense of acceptance and peace, all these are truths established by experience. Jesus Christ and his impress on the life of the world, this collection of writings known as the Bible and the unique influence it has exerted upon the spiritual life of mankind, are facts of experience. All these truths must have an honest hearing when we come to shape our philosophy of life. And so useful will be the light they shed that we can afford to hold fast to the facts, taking them in their wider range, and to proceed inductively, allowing the systems to take care of themselves as best they may.

It is possible to make a strong argument for the claim that good men prosper and only bad men suffer, if we pick and choose, but taking the facts as they come, by and large, we are left with confusing questions as to the divine justice upon our hands. The arraignment of John Stuart Mill seems beyond answer, "If the law of all creation was justice and the Creator were omnipotent, then each person's share of happiness or suffering would be exactly proportioned to that person's good or evil deeds. No human being would have a worse lot than another without worse desert; accident or favoritism would have no place in such a world. And no one is able to blind himself to the fact that the world we live in is totally different from this."

If indeed suffering has no other office than penalty for wrong-doing; if all of God's accounts are settled

in this world with no further pages of experience to be unrolled in the future; if all the facts bearing on the case are within our grasp, then providence in certain cases must be admitted to be unjust. The very dilemma in which Job found himself raised the query in his mind — “If a man die, shall he live again?” The answer given is either negative or at best a confessed inability to affirm a future life, but it serves to show the action of a serious mind pushing on for a possible vindication beyond the grave. The main failure of these friends lay then in their effort to bend every set of concrete facts to suit a preconceived theory. Safety lies rather in affirming great principles and general tendencies, but allowing for the modifying influence of unusual sets of facts, and making room for the instruction of further experience.

The brutal insistence of the three friends touching their claim brought from Job a stout protest. They accused him of impatience, and impatient he surely was. But there was occasion. The three men were forgetting how much easier it is to sit off and coolly discuss another’s misfortune, than it is to stand under and bear it.

“To him that is ready to faint kindness should be shewed
from his friend;

Even to him that forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

“Oh that my vexation were but weighed,
And my calamity laid in the balances together!
For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas:
Therefore have my words been rash.
For the arrows of the Almighty are within me.

CONVENTIONAL ORTHODOXY

I also could speak as you do;
If your soul were in my soul's stead,
I could join words together against you,
And shake mine head at you."

It is a heartfelt appeal which he makes to them; it is the cry of one ready to faint, of a man barely alive, feeling the thrust of the Almighty's arrows within him. He suffered more than the loss of property and health, of wife and children; he suffered the loss of the confidence and esteem of his fellow men. They did regard him stricken and smitten of God for his iniquities. His calamity seemed to impeach his integrity and to brand him as wicked before the world. This was the sorest thrust of all, and we appreciate fully his impatience and bitterness when goaded by their cruel words. We are not studying here the utterance of a man sitting easily in his dressing-gown and slippers, smoking a comfortable pipe, while he coolly discusses the painful problems of existence. Job writhed in the pain of the problem with which he grappled. He saw how much easier it was to be resigned and philosophical over the trials of others than over one's own, and as these friends spoke on, he discovered that they were not penetrating to the secret of his experience; nor were they frank and ingenuous. They were not even fair—they were speaking unrighteously for God and talking wickedly for their system. Therefore he refused all their words as being impotent and vain.

"I have heard many such things:
Miserable comforters are ye all."

But he could not rest in that bare refusal; he never became the passive stoic or despairing idler. He was ever and eagerly seeking some genuine solution.

“Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat!
I would order my cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.
Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
And backward, but I cannot perceive him.”

Finding this effort unavailing, his mind turned to the thought of a possible Arbiter between himself and the Almighty, but there seemed to be no such Mediator within reach.

“If I have sinned, what can I do unto thee,
O thou watcher of men!
For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him;
There is no daysman betwixt us,
That might lay his hand upon us both.”

He also raised that question of a future life — “If a man die, shall he live again?” — but according to the imperfect faith of that early time the hope was too vague to be relied upon. “He will slay me; I have no hope.” And thus he fell back, unsatisfied with anything thus far gained. Orthodoxy as he knew it had failed to reconcile such adversity as his with divine justice. He could only cry:

“He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass;
He hath set darkness in my paths.”

IV. THE SPIRITUAL ENERGY OF A PERPLEXED MAN

THE patient sufferer realized that the theological theories of his day when held apart could be defended with some show of reason, but that they broke down in the presence of actual experiences. Yet he never allowed himself to fall into that negative attitude which is easily contented with knocking over the cob houses of belief proposed by weaker men, meanwhile building nothing itself. Job was a man of spiritual energy, courageous, positive, constructive in the whole bent of his mind. He reached out, if haply he might find some truth not yet embodied in the current systems. He stood perplexed because he was confronted by problems confessedly too hard for him; faith, if it lives at all, must live in a world shadowed and confusing. His system, and that of the three friends, had collapsed because the facts undermined the claim that good men always prosper and only evil men suffer. It will be interesting, then, to see how this man of spiritual energy, too honest to pretend, too sincere to utter forms of faith which represent nothing real, too frank to conceal the vital points of his own difficulty, bears himself at such a juncture.

First of all he will not stoop to any pretense regarding his own character. He was suffering extraordi-

nary misfortune which to the theological mind of that day was sure evidence of heinous wrong-doing; he was consequently urged to make confession of his sins and obtain forgiveness. The appeal of one of these friends was to this effect:

“As for me, I would seek unto God.
If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away.
Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.”

But Job was conscious that he had not been so wicked as to merit such misfortune; his unceasing purpose had been to live a godly, upright, useful life. We have the testimony of the Lord himself that in this regard Job was not self-deceived. He was indeed a sound, straight, God-fearing, evil-hating man, and there was none like him in all the earth. For such a man, out of deference to the requirements of a system, to grovel and accuse himself, to make believe that there was some hidden wickedness about him which merited such misfortune, would have been flatly dishonest. Job was throughout a man who clung to reality with both hands, allowing the theories to take care of themselves as best they might. Thus he refused to make any such confession of wrong-doing.

“He will slay me; I have no hope:
Nevertheless I will maintain my ways before him;
Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me.”

The Adversary had raised the question of motive — “Does Job serve God for nought; is he not doing

it all for pay?" His three friends had raised the question of fact:— Does Job serve God at all; is he not secretly an awful sinner, deserving this unusual misfortune? They argued with him, entreated him, and even sought to browbeat him into making a confession of some hidden wickedness. But though the teaching of his day and his own suffering seemed successfully to impeach him, he held firmly to the testimony of his own conscience and to the assurance of the Divine Spirit, for God does not leave himself without witness in the heart of any man who seeks to do His will.

"Let come on me what will,
I will maintain my ways before him."

When John Lord, the author of "Beacon Lights of History," was being examined by an ecclesiastical council in his early ministry, he was asked if his consecration was such that he would be willing to be damned, if need be, for the glory of God. It was in the days when Calvinism was in the saddle, and this classical question was a common test of one's spirit of submission to the divine decrees. John Lord replied that he would not. And in response to further question and argument on the part of the examiners, all he could be gotten to say was, that he was willing that some of the members of the council should be damned for the glory of God, if need be. This resolute instinct of self-preservation and of self-respect on the part of a conscientious man was sound and right. So Job maintained the truth of his position

and refused to stultify himself by any unreal confession as to a sense of sinfulness which did not exist.

His own conscience and the spirit of the Almighty both witnessed to his integrity, but he could also appeal to the open record of his life and challenge his accusers to bring in their indictment if they were able. This fine passage has been called "the oath of clearing." He passed those aspects of his life, where strong men are apt to fail, in searching review, and they seemed to stand the test. His conception of piety far outran the usual Old Testament standards; it was not legal, but evangelical. Not merely was the act of adultery disclaimed, but the unholy glance of the eye; not merely the unjust accumulation of wealth was denied, but that immoral confidence which it is so easy to cherish in one's material possessions when they become great. Not merely had the open idolatry of the sun or of the host of heaven been refused, but even the inclination to set up the creature in the place belonging to the Creator. His righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and it was such "ways" that he was resolved to maintain and defend before the Lord.

Hear, then, his "oath of clearing" as he challenges them to deny or to discredit the constituent elements in his integrity.

He is free from social impurity:

"I made a covenant with mine eyes;
How then should I look upon a maid?
If mine heart hath been enticed unto a woman,

And I have laid in wait at my neighbor's door:
Then let my wife bow down
And become the menial slave of another."

He has never been a harsh employer:

"If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my
maidservant,
When they contended with me:
What then shall I do when God riseth up?
And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?
Did not he that made me in the womb make him?"

He has never been guilty of that haughty pride
which is so easy to the prosperous, nor has he put
things before God:

"If I have made gold my hope,
Or rejoiced because my right hand had gotten much;
If I beheld the sun when it shined,
Or the moon walking in brightness;
And my heart hath been secretly enticed,
Then let mine iniquity be punished by the judge."

He has never taken advantage of the misfortunes
of men nor oppressed those who were his enemies:

"If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him;
If I have eaten the fruits of the land without money,
Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:
Let thistles grow instead of wheat,
And cockle instead of barley."

He has been actively kind and helpful to those who were in want:

"I was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame,
And a father to the needy!
If I have withheld the poor from their desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;
If I have eaten my morsel alone,
And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;
Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone."

Thus he refused to mix his colors or to make a pretense of confession where wilful sin did not exist. He reviewed his actions, his habits, his desires, and found that he had sought to live a godly, upright, and useful life. He could not therefore admit that such adversity was a just penalty upon some secret wrongdoing. He stood before his friends and before God maintaining his "ways"; and in the end he is commended for his straightforward honesty.

In the hour of terrible misfortune, he furthermore held to this path of uprightness. In a former chapter we have seen the shock which this unexplained adversity brought. When his property was all swept away through no fault of his own; when his children were all killed by the storm; when his health yielded to the dreadful disease of leprosy; when his wife turned from him in bitterness and scorn; when his friends lost faith in his sincerity and suspected him of hidden crime, — in the face of all this it would have been easy to cast all principle to the winds. If such distress comes to a life like mine, he might have

said, What is the use to try to serve God or to live righteously? It requires moral stamina for an upright man overtaken by defeat not to become rebellious and reckless through sheer distrust of the moral order.

There is something sublime, therefore, in the way this man bore himself in the hour of misfortune. When calamity fell upon him, he still stood up to say, "We have received good things at the hand of God, shall we not also receive hard things? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It was no mere pious outburst of the moment called forth in the excitement of a crisis. In the weary days that followed when poverty and disease, loneliness and suspicion clothed him as with a garment, he still maintained his righteousness before God. He will defend his integrity in the past; he will maintain the same purpose of righteousness in the shadowed and confusing present; he will persist in it whatever may be the future!

"I will maintain my ways before him.

He will slay me; I have no hope,

Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me."

The friends of Job were mistaken as to the fact — Job did serve God. He had always been serving him and even the direst misfortune could not disturb that fundamental attitude of his life. The Adversary was mistaken as to the motive — Job was not serving God for pay. His service continued when that which the Adversary called "pay" had stopped.

Job served God when he was rich, healthy, and happy; he served him on the ash-heap, poor, sick, childless, and suspected. And conscious of his unwavering integrity, he indulged at this point in a touching retrospect; in the midst of pain and doubt, he summoned to his aid certain precious and sunny memories:

“Oh that I were as in the months of old,
As in the days when God watched over me;
When his lamp shined upon my head!
When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
When the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me,
But now they that are younger than I have me in derision,
And now I am become their song,
Yea, I am a byword unto them.”

But melancholy as was his situation, his righteous determination was not surrendered. Sick or well, rich or poor, happy or wretched, esteemed or despised, clear in his belief, or confused to the point of despair, till he dies, he is resolved not to remove his integrity from him! Here is the one place of security for the man plunged in misfortune or overcome by doubt — whatever else is uncertain, this is sure, it is always right to do right. In the face of all the uncertainty and confusion possible,

“Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding.”

But some modification of Job's belief must of necessity result from the suffering he has endured.

The fuller treatment of the correction and purification of his faith will come later, but some mention of his changed point of view may be made here. His own theological theory had been precisely the one brought forward by his friends, that good men prosper and bad men suffer, because God is just. He listened while Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar said all there was to be said on behalf of such a claim; he reviewed his own observation and experience, but there was no help for it, the theory broke down in the presence of actual facts. Good men had been overtaken by unspeakable misfortune; and conversely bad men had sometimes seemed to escape the just penalty of their misdeeds. Job was confused, and while not in a position to put forward a new system of belief, the necessity of some modification was forced home.

The beginning of that modification seemed to come in the feeling that the religious philosophy of that day was not final; there were facts which it did not interpret. It was idle and useless to ignore these or to seek to cover them up with contradictions. Material prosperity could not inevitably be taken as a sign of God's favor; and suffering must have some other office than that of penalty; granting its usefulness as penalty for wrong-doing, this certainly does not give a complete account of its place in the moral economy of the world.

We have made progress when once we have broken up that fixed, hard, impervious state of mind. Let men admit that their present definitions of many spiritual realities, the providence of God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the efficacy of prayer, the moral

transformation by divine grace, are at their best only approximate statements of realities too great for final definition, realities sure to make further disclosures of themselves by the added experience of mankind, and room is made at once for that progressive spiritual education of the race which God has been conducting from the first, is conducting now, and is to carry forward through the unfolding years.

We do not find those once familiar words "Finis" or "The End" printed on the last page of a book so commonly as in other days. Even when the author has spoken his mind in a huge volume, he knows that there is much more to be said upon his theme, and so he leaves the way open without the slightest effort to block it. He is conscious that we have not reached the terminus on any of the great trunk lines of religious inquiry. We are scattered along at various way stations, thankful for what we know, grateful for the progress made, but confessing with the apostle of old that we have not attained, neither are we already made perfect either in theory or in practise. We are simply determined to use the part we know in pressing toward the mark. This is the only tenable position for serious, inquiring, devoted natures face to face with problems where unsolved remainders resist all efforts to gain exact and final knowledge.

When certain theologians were once declaiming on behalf of a hard and fast system of belief, and denouncing those who in any wise took exception to it, one wise saint exclaimed: "Brethren, I beseech

you by the mercies of God, believe it possible that you may be mistaken and that you may learn something more." The willingness to admit the unfinished character of our theological systems and the necessity for readjustment and enlargement in the light of further experience, is never a sign of spiritual decadence; it is rather an indication of spiritual energy and health. Too often men refuse to admit any change in their position on important subjects, because of the trouble involved in learning and unlearning, in restatement and readjustment; and the foolish attempt is again made to put the new wine of increased experience into the old wine-skins of finished dogma, with the inevitable waste and loss. The man whose heart is pure, whose mind is open, and whose face is toward the front, is the man whose spiritual life has most value and significance for the moral progress of his day.

Finally Job asserted his confidence in the moral order maintained by the living God. If we should stop at the point already reached, the note would be one of desperation, — desperation coupled with a determination to hold fast to righteousness, but with a melancholy note. It would say, "If there is nothing better in sight, let us fear God, for that is wisdom, and depart from evil, for that is understanding. Even if the world is not ruled by justice and if death ends all, still we cannot play our part better or meet death more courageously than to do it with clean hands and pure hearts. What better thing can we give the world now or leave as a heritage to our children than the record of a righteous life?" All this

Job said, — “He will slay me; I have no hope, but I will not put away mine integrity from me.”

But he went far beyond that; he built up from moral considerations, by induction from admitted facts, a certain sure confidence. This book, it will be remembered, belongs to the wisdom literature of the Bible. No mention is made of the Law given by Moses nor of any “Thus saith the Lord” of the prophet. We have here simply a careful expression of trust built up by a study of the facts of experience as they open before men in general.

Job was pondering the question with a pure heart, for he held fast his integrity, and with an open mind, for the collapse of the current theological theory had left him free to think. With that spiritual energy which forbade his resting content with anything less than the utmost effort to find a starting-point for his convictions, he reasoned his way.

The world seems to be unjust, he said, — here a good man is suffering, there robbers prosper and their tents are secure. No man can blind his eyes to these apparent injustices. And the great cosmic processes seem to be morally indifferent. One wiser than Job saw that God makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good; He sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust. These words may be quoted indeed in support of the broad impartiality of God’s kindness, but they may also be quoted as evidence of the moral indifference of the cosmic forces which enfold us.

Yet can a righteous God permanently suffer these injustices to remain? For some inscrutable reason

they exist now, but in order to avoid moral bankruptcy and the utter denial of his moral character, must He not sometime, somewhere, set all things even? Thus the problem forced itself home upon Job's thought — he might as a man accept injustice, suffer under it and die under it, but could God accept it as final! A man's own son might accept unjust treatment in his home and get through with it, crippled, hindered, wounded perhaps, but could the man himself stand it? As a righteous father could he allow permanent injustice to mar his treatment of his son? Where, then, we may ask, is the moral sensitiveness of that Holy One from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named?

When Job reached that point he was a long way toward the confidence finally expressed. "My misfortunes seem to impeach me," he cried, "but He that will vouch for me is on high. I know that my Vindicator is alive, and at the last He will stand upon the earth!"

Here we have one of the high-water marks in the book of Job. He was utterly flung back upon God — the property which would have occupied his attention was gone; the children who would have comforted him were all dead; the wife who might have shared and lightened his misery had bidden him curse God and die; the health that would have enabled him to struggle for another fortune had given place to loathsome disease; his friends came, not with sympathy, but with accusations against his sincerity. He was thrown back upon God with the intensity and the daring of sore distress, with the bare necessities

of one who came naked into the world and seemed destined to depart naked out of it. And in that intense experience he felt sure that God could not permanently endure such injustice. "I know that my Vindicator is alive, and that he shall stand at the last upon the earth."

It is a splendid, shining confidence which Job exhibits here. The scientists have taught us lessons we never can forget as to the universal fidelity of physical law, even in the smallest details. Nature wears an aspect of infinite patience with things apparently insignificant in the vast evolutionary design. In the ongoing of cosmic processes so great that they baffle the mind, the very hairs of our heads, the pollen of the flowers, the tints on the wing of a bird, the fine dust that blows through the air, are all numbered and made significant items in an unhurried plan. There is universal fidelity down to the smallest things. And if the Author of moral life, the Maker of a universe, which taken as a whole shows itself frankly and strongly on the side of righteousness, cares supremely for truth, purity, justice, and love, then heaven and earth, in so far as they are physical facts, may pass away, but the interests of those who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly, cannot pass away. The vindication of their lives must come at last because of the fidelity of God.

The author of the book was not prepared to offer a program. The need of an Arbiter or Daysman who will put his hand upon them both and act as a Mediator between God and man was felt, but ap-

parently such a one was not at hand. The satisfaction of going even to God's seat with an array of arguments was suggested, but apparently was not attainable. The hope of a future life, where all things may be made right, was named, — "If a man die, shall he live again?" — but was not affirmed. Job did not feel clear on these points, but in any event he felt that it was more important that a man should actually believe in the living God, powerful, wise, beneficent, than that he should believe in any number of details regarding his own personal prospects in a world to come. Thus what was really vital and fundamental was wrought into Job's experience until he could look up and say, "I know! I know that my Vindicator is alive." He affirmed his confidence in a moral order which shall at last make all these puzzling problems plain.


A brave confidence it was for that far-off time and for any time. Much better every way for one's moral health than those elaborate programs of the hereafter, with their sensuous, sentimental pictures of eternal bliss, stimulating men to an unreal moral heroism! Plain living and high thinking have their just value at the table of the Lord. It is good to get down occasionally to what is bed-rock for us as this fundamental confidence was bed-rock for Job, and feel the strength of its unyielding support unadorned by any more elaborate beliefs. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, he will inevitably reward his own, though he bear long with them. Permanent injustice in a world manifestly created

THE STRANGE WAYS OF GOD

by a Moral Being and manifestly administered for moral ends, becomes impossible to rational thought. Flung back upon God by the adversity of earthly life, Job springs to that high confidence in the integrity of his Maker. There is a moral order whose outcome cannot fail to make puzzles plain and to give every man according to his works.

“I know that my Vindicator is alive,
And at the last he shall stand upon the earth.
He knoweth the way that I take,
He is trying me
And afterward I shall come forth as gold.”

V. THE ANSWER FROM THE CLOUDS

E are studying a drama where the stage is set in the open air. We have seen Job bravely bearing up under the shock of unparalleled and inexplicable adversity. We have seen him sitting on the ash-heap in his leprous misery while his friends urged upon him their mistaken and useless theology. We have seen him perplexed and compelled to modify his old beliefs, but possessed of such spiritual energy as to hold fast his integrity. All this took place under the open sky, when suddenly, as the fierce debate went on, they saw a great storm gathering in the west.

The clouds were massing themselves as for battle. The muttering of distant thunder was heard. The wind began to rise and the cattle with sure instinct came hurriedly to a place of shelter. All this to the end that the author might introduce another speaker upon the scene. Three times each had Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar held the center of the stage with studied speech; Job had cursed his day and had made reply to each in turn; Elihu, the younger man, who at first held his tongue in the presence of his elders, had reviewed the argument and had incidentally called attention to the approaching storm. And now at length the author proceeds to bring upon the stage a more majestic presence in the person of Jehovah, the living God!

It was a bold thing for the author of a drama to attempt. To bring upon the stage the Almighty himself and to introduce his words into the dialogue was no easy task. Those simple childish days when men spoke freely of "the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," or as partaking of the hospitality of Abraham at his tent door, or as appearing to Joshua like a captain of soldiers, were gone. A new sense of the power, the dignity, and the unapproachableness of God had come. The author had a difficult undertaking upon his hands when he sought to bring Jehovah, whom no man hath seen nor can see, into the debate. He showed himself competent, however; his instinct of reverence and his fine taste as to what was fitting led him to picture Jehovah riding upon the storm and speaking by a Voice which issued out of the whirlwind. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind."

It brings a magnificent picture before the mind of any one who has ever seen a genuine storm. Picture to yourself a real, live storm, huge and black, hiding half the universe when he stands up! He comes on like a giant, twenty miles at a stride, with a rush of wind that sweeps you off your feet. The glare of lightning, which dazzles you, is the angry flash of his eye. His hoarse laugh is heard in the crash of thunder. In his rough sport he catches up the houses of men as if they were playthings, rips them in pieces and flings the fragments across the prairie as he rushes ahead with a wild roar! The sense of the littleness and the helplessness of man-

kind in the presence of Him who holdeth the winds in his fists never dies out of the heart of one who has witnessed a cyclone. The fierce tempests of that Oriental region where Job dwelt are sometimes no less terrible, and we see instantly the author's purpose in introducing Jehovah wrapped in the awful garments of a storm.

Nor is this all mere stage play. We know the use that poets make of nature when they picture her as somehow acting sympathetically with the deeds of men, and the writers of Scripture also make spiritual processes dramatic by portraying nature as the willing instrument of revelation. When Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments at the top of Sinai, we read of thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the wind blowing with a roar which was like the sound of the Lord's voice in a trumpet. When Elijah fled before the threat of Jezebel to gain encouragement at the mountain of God in Horeb, we read that there was a strong wind which rent the mountains, an earthquake which rent in pieces the rocks, and after the earthquake a fire, the lightning of the Lord! These natural phenomena were the precursors of "the still small voice" in which Jehovah presently held communication with his discouraged prophet. In the literature of the Bible, as well as in other literature, we find this frequent employment of nature as an impressive background for the manifestation of spiritual truth.

But it was even more than high literary art to thus picture Jehovah as riding upon the wings of the wind.

The author would have us hear "the soul of external nature" speaking in terms of revelation. We are dealing with a portion of the Wisdom Literature; the Temple is not here nor the Law given by Moses nor the spiritual ecstasy and vision of the Prophet. The lessons of experience and the considerations drawn from the broad commonplaces of moral reason are our instructors here; it is along these lines that the wisdom writers gain their spiritual meat from God. It was therefore directly in the pathway of the author's main endeavor, to make the storm itself, with all the other phenomena of inanimate nature as well as the living creatures, speak out and declare the wondrous truth of God. The things that are made are summoned to the great debate that they may declare the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead.

"Look unto the heavens, and see!
Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.
Bend your eyes to the hawk and the raven,
The wild ox and the wild goat!
Hearken unto this, O Job,
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine."

We have unfolded here a spiritual truth much emphasized in modern times. God is in his world. He did not create it and then put it out of his own hands into the care of impersonal law. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and to this hour the heavens declare his glory as something resident and powerful in those celestial move-

ments; and out of the lips of these cosmic processes a voice goes forth into all the earth and its words to the end of the world.

In affirming "God in nature" we need not forget nor belittle the God of grace; and conversely in urging upon the attention and conscience of mankind the God of the Bible we shall be unfaithful servants if we forget what God has said and is saying in the skies, the fields, and the ocean depths. The Bible is the best expression we have of the spirit of God in literature. The Church is the best expression of that spirit in an institution. The untouched processes of the natural world about us are the best expression in material forms. When the Master of spiritual values walked the earth, the wheat and the flowers, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, the varying responses of the soil, and the work of the leaven as it wrought with the meal, were all full of spiritual suggestion. It is therefore in line with the best method the world has ever seen, and a prophetic note of anticipation as well, when this author brings the voice of Jehovah out of the storm and bids us hear the soul of external nature interpreting the ways of God to men. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind."

First of all the Lord reminded Job that the particular mystery of his personal life and lot was only an item in the greater mystery which enfolded him. Those opening sentences are not spoken in rebuff. Job is not censured for questioning the ways of God nor for seeking to solve the mystery of undeserved suffering. In the end the Lord himself commends

Job because he has spoken "the thing that is right." The opening words are not a censure, but an invitation to take a broader view and see how individual perplexity is only one item in a great, vast scheme which eludes our comprehension.

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou knowest it all!
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?"

In the days when men believed that the earth was flat and stationary, resting upon something which held it in place, this question of foundation was a perpetual puzzle. And now that we know that the earth is a globe, moving swiftly through space, we are still in the presence of an unsolved mystery. The leading scientists have nothing clear or definite to say as to how the earth acquired its initial velocity. We are as far from a solution of this commonplace fact that the earth revolves, as was Job from knowing where the foundations of his earth were fastened.

The Lord invited Job to look upon the cluster of the Pleiades and the bands of Orion, to watch the signs of the zodiac in their stately annual procession, to witness the flash of the lightning or the dust running before the storm, and thus to realize that the origin, maintenance, and final meaning of all these mighty processes were far beyond his ken. His personal problem was part of an infinite mystery in the presence of which all life is lived.

His attention is carried on up into animate nature. Those fine adjustments which make possible all the

varied forms of teeming life that fill the globe and the true significance of all these myriad creatures, how far beyond the highest science of our own day is the perfect understanding of it all! Children in the menagerie, looking upon some strange animal from far-off Africa or from the depths of the ocean, even as Job looked upon the leviathan and the behemoth, ask: "What did God make him for?" The ripest learning can only repeat the same old question and leave it still unanswered. The sight of a problem vaster every way than the measure of our ability ought to induce within us the spirit of modesty and patience. We ought not to throw away our belief in God, our habits of righteous action, our trust in the future, simply because we have on our hands the perplexing personal problem of unexplained adversity. Hearken unto this, O Job: Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Wait on the Lord and be of good courage, until by the further declarations of his meaning and purpose he shall strengthen thine heart!

The voice of the Lord further affirmed that there were method and meaning even in those phenomena which seemed inexplicable. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Counsel there was, but men by their foolish theories were hiding it away. Method, meaning, purpose there were, though not as yet discoverable in their completeness by the mind of man. The earth was not swinging loose and wild through infinite space; the foundations thereof were indeed fastened somewhere; the terms and conditions of life were estab-

lished and ordered by moral purpose. Moral insight will recognize this fact, for when those conditions were first laid down, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy!" The morning stars, the soul of inanimate nature, and the sons of God, the beings of moral insight, sang together and shouted for joy over the recognized significance of those mighty beginnings.

Men are dull to see and slow of heart to believe the things that belong to their peace. Sometimes it seems as if inanimate nature would impatiently cry out to tell us where our salvation lies. Jesus said that if the simple, childlike natures who found in him their moral recovery and the hope of the world, should hold their peace, the stones would cry out. In default of human testimony, the voiceless matter would become vocal with a spiritual message. So this author calls up the morning stars, the springs of the deep, the hail and the snow, the wild beasts and the wild birds, to bear their testimony that meaning and purpose are the lords of life; that meaning and purpose unceasingly rule, out in the immensities of space, down to the very depths and foundations of earth, and on out to the frontier of man's knowledge and interest, where strange forms of animal life like the crocodile and hippopotamus hold sway. Meaning and purpose are here affirmed, though as to what the final meaning of all these mysterious forms and processes may be, the last word has not been and cannot yet be spoken.

There is comfort in all this; even upon his ash-heap, property gone, health gone, children dead, his

friends viewing him with suspicion, and his confident belief assailed by a persistent "Why," — even there Job could yet gird up his loins and play the man. If he could only know that his suffering was not needless nor meaningless, that down to the very depths of his struggle there reached the thought and intent of his Maker bent on some wise and good end, he could hold fast his integrity undaunted. The very knowledge that such purpose was there would summon all that was heroic in him to stand up and bear its part in that undeclared plan of God.

The private soldier may not know why he is wearily tramping through the morass, or blindly digging in the ditch, or pacing to and fro in the dark and sleet on some lonely picket-line. But let him feel that there is a general who does know the meaning of it all, and who is slowly, surely, steadily moving toward a certain desired and attainable end, toward final victory over that which opposes itself to his country's peace, and the private is at once filled with courage and zeal; the weary march, the labor in the ditch, the peril of the picket-line are all heroically borne as part of a plan, undeclared as yet, undiscoverable by him, but clear and plain at headquarters.

This is the attitude of rational faith. We believe in God. We believe that at Headquarters, Power, Wisdom, Beneficence are to be found, and that down through the ages that Infinite Person has been gaining his ends. The study of geology gives us a story of higher and ever higher orders of life which emerge and displace the lower. The record of written history is of

progress where higher and yet higher levels in human attainment have been gained, held, and made the starting-points for further advance. And to eyes that can see, there is in all this meaning and purpose. Thus Job gained a vision of the significance of all created things, from the least to the greatest, as holding relation to a plan too great as yet for final statement, but a true object of reasonable faith.

“He seemed to hear a heavenly Friend
And through thick veils to apprehend
A labor working to an end.”

The Voice from the storm also affirmed what is implied above, the sympathetic interest of the Lord as all-inclusive: “Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” The Voice from the clouds did not try to argue out Job’s individual case with him, and for that reason some writers have maintained that the Voice was not an answer, but a rebuff. It ought to be remembered, however, that the author himself did not assume to know the perfect and final meaning of all earthly misfortune; he did not dare to put a lame, imperfect explanation on the lips of Jehovah as a weaker mind would have done. So he leaves this individual case without explanation in his “Answer from the clouds,” and gives Job instead a wider vision of God’s sympathetic interest in all forms of life.

He draws a noble picture of joyous and beneficent Power, of the constant presence of Purpose and of an all-conclusive Sympathy! This sympathy extends to

the vast things, — the foundations of the earth, the stars in their course, the depths of the sea, the rain and snow and hail ! It extends no less to the small things; the wild birds and wild goats, which seem at first to have no value for God or man, are also objects of Divine Interest ! The hawk soars by his wisdom, the eagle mounts up at his command to make her nest on high. The wild ass goes out free, scorning the tumult of the city and making the mountain range his pasture. The wild goats bring forth their young and lead them to the rocks where they find their food. This sympathy extends as well to forms of life remote from human knowledge or interest. He brings in the monsters of the Nile, the leviathan or crocodile, the behemoth or hippopotamus — even to these huge, strange beasts the sympathetic interest of God extends. The author thus asserts the joyous sympathy of God with things small and great, with things near and things remote.

Job had come to believe that God was inaccessible and that his ways were past finding out. He was eager to discover Him and to come even to his seat, but he went forward and he was not there, and backward but he could not find him. Now he is told by the Voice that God is not inaccessible but everywhere present, and that his sympathetic interest is all-inclusive. It is the very argument used by Jesus centuries later. "Be not anxious as to what ye shall eat or drink or put on," he said. "Live right; seek first the kingdom of God and these things shall be added unto you, because your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Con-

sider the lilies how they grow; they are not anxious, yet your heavenly Father clothes them. Consider the ravens; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not of much more value than they?"

It was not a picture of any special providence or miraculous interference. There is no record in the Bible or out of it that God ever wrought a miracle to feed a bird, yet Christ says, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." It was rather the testimony of Jesus to the presence of divine purpose and love within those ordinary processes which clothe the lilies and feed the birds; within, not apart from them nor in the gaps or breaks, but within the steady march of those great processes themselves, we are to find and know the presence of God! The power, the wisdom, and the beneficence within these processes will one day be fully declared, making all puzzles plain and setting all things even. "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine," the Voice said; we may therefore trust God to deal equitably with his own.

"Whatsoever" — the untamed and savage things like the wild ass and wild goat, the crocodile and hippopotamus, all are His! And those wild, rough things we call adversities, calamities, unexplained misfortunes, those savage events which fall upon men as they fell upon Job, sweeping away property, health, loved ones, and inner peace! — none of these fall to our lot without the heavenly Father's notice. Two sparrows are sold for a farthing, yet not one of them is forgotten. Up into his all-inclusive purpose

and deep into the heart of his universal sympathy, are gathered these wild experiences sometimes regarded as meaningless! Thus when we truly feel that he knows all and means something as the outcome of it all, we can gather strength to go on!

Up in the clear, storm-washed air, that was what Job saw. The message indicated in this brief way was what he heard above the roar of the whirlwind. It has the more value in that it was not a spiritual ecstasy vouchsafed to some favored doubter, but what we may all look into the heavens and see. We all live in the presence of the same natural world that spoke to Job. It was not the utterance of any miraculous intervention, but the voice of a storm such as often swept the land of Uz.

We find here the enduring significance of the order of nature itself as a divine voice, and this has more value for the spiritual life than would any interruption of that order, however marvelous. If one man had really lived for three days inside a great fish; if three men had actually walked unscorched in a furnace heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated; if one soldier had actually commanded the sun to stand still that a longer day might be had for winning victories, — if all these startling recitals were sober history instead of being, as many persons now believe, poetry and parable embodying useful spiritual truths, still all these events, occurring but once and not capable of being repeated in our own experience, would be of slight significance. They cannot be relied upon to-day as items in the common experience of ordinary people. Men who are swallowed

by sharks die; men who are cast into blast furnaces are burned to a crisp; men who call upon the sun to stand still see it move calmly on its appointed way. The accounts fail to furnish us the highest form of help even if we should accept them as genuine history, because such marvelous experiences cannot be repeated in the lives of other men in their hour of need.


But the spiritual testimony of these cosmic processes to which Jesus pointed when he said, "Your heavenly Father clothes the lilies and feeds the birds," has abiding significance and utility because it tells of that which is capable of endless repetition. The stars in their courses fight steadily against Sisera and against whatever opposes itself to the development of the spiritual life of the race. The message of the wild ass and the wild goat, of the Nile monsters finding, through the sympathetic interest of God, their appointed opportunity for fulfilling his purpose and living their lives, says to each generation what it said to Job. Their line is gone out into all the earth and their words to the end of the world, and there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. They speak everywhere of an all-inclusive power and wisdom and goodness bent upon higher and yet higher levels of existence, bent upon the moral progress of mankind, toward the perfect man after the stature of the fulness of Christ. Study the meaning of this Voice out of the whirlwind, ponder what it had to say, and you will learn to meet and know God along the dusty highway of common life, upon the great thoroughfares where travel the cosmic processes

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which enfold us all. It came to Job in the roar of the storm, and because he had ears to hear, he heard the message:

“Look unto the heavens, and see!
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.”

VI. THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW FAITH

 WE have come to the last scene in this moral drama. The shock of unexplained adversity has been felt; the failure of the easy conventional interpretations has been witnessed; the sturdy honesty of a perplexed sufferer holding fast his integrity, though compelled to change his beliefs, has been studied; the answer from the clouds has given us the larger sense of God's sympathetic interest in everything under heaven; and now we come to the closing scene, which might be called "The Emergence of a New Faith" corrected and purified by hard experience.

The assertion has been made that the author of Job raises problems which he does not solve. Why does God allow good men to suffer undeserved misfortune? was one of the questions asked. The current theology said that all suffering was punishment for sin, and the three friends labored incessantly to maintain that proposition. But the record of Job's life, his own conscience, and the testimony borne to his integrity by the Lord himself, all contradicted their contention, and it broke down. Why, then, did Job suffer? The question is not fully answered; the author in representing Jehovah as speaking from the

whirlwind does not attempt a complete reply. He did not know, and he dared not put an insufficient answer on the lips of Jehovah. He therefore passed that question by, and the Voice from the clouds speaks of other and more fundamental matters.

In place of such a definite answer to the one query, there came a fuller, richer vision of God, which would avail more than many such detailed replies. In the hour of the storm and above the roar of the wind, Job hears a Voice affirming the presence, the interest and the sympathy of God in and with all forms of life. God's tender mercies were seen to be over all his works. The visible things of his creation were declaring the invisible things of his power and Godhead. Whatsoever was under the whole heaven was his and in the end he could be depended upon to be faithful with his own. In the presence of this new vision of God, all Job's past notions of him as being merely a careful paymaster measuring out the appropriate amount of prosperity for a given amount of piety, or the appropriate amount of suffering for a given quantity of sin, seemed mere tradition and hearsay. Thus he cries in the face of this grander idea of God:

“I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee!”

This larger vision of God was Job's new faith. The crude notion that suffering has no other place in the moral economy of the world than punishment was gone; the notion that piety must bring immedi-

ate and constant prosperity or fall under suspicion was cast off; the idea that absolute correspondence between character and circumstances is constantly and universally realized was abandoned. Indeed the question was raised as to whether such a system could be here maintained without loss to disinterested righteousness. The mystery of that dark passage in Job's life still lay upon the mind of the author, as similar experiences lie heavily upon some of our minds. It remained a source of perplexity to Job himself, but his eye now saw God, not absent, not indifferent, not inefficient, as he had sometimes feared, but vaster, richer, and with ways past finding out. In an earlier scene with his knowledge and insight he had cried out, in spite of his pain and perplexity, "I know that my Vindicator is alive, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth, . . . and without my flesh" — which was being destroyed by the dreadful disease — "shall I see God." Now the expectation is accomplished, the revelation has come in terms of personal experience, and he cries with joy,

"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee."

When men have upon their hands two sets of facts which apparently cannot be adjusted, they often abandon one and hold fast to the other. The scientific man, feeling sure of facts which can be weighed, measured, analyzed, and knowing the difficulty of adjusting these to the facts of spiritual experience, is oftentimes tempted to disregard the latter and hold

fast only the things material. Religious men feeling the difficulty of adjusting the facts of prayer, conversion, inspiration, providence, to the scientific order, sometimes abandon the latter and become unreasoning mystics. The true way is to abandon none of the facts, but hold fast to them all, waiting for that fuller adjustment and reconciliation which must come with the advance of knowledge touching things seen and unseen. Difficulties between the claims made for the world of sense and those made for the world of spiritual experience do exist, but the fact remains that faith in God, the habit of prayer, the hope of immortality, do produce nobler types of character than those wrought out by schemes of life which ignore religious sanctions and aids. Men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; no more do they gather, widely and continuously, the highest types of moral character from the cherishing of beliefs which are essentially false. Thus Job did not say "I see all things made plain," but "Mine eye seeth thee" — and in that fuller vision of the character of God he is content to rest and hope.

"Now mine eye seeth thee!" His mainstay throughout was his abiding faith in God. Righteousness was not to him a mere scheme of enlightened and far-seeing self-interest; fearing God was not doing something for pay. The sneer of the Adversary was met and answered. The hedge about Job's life was broken down and through the gaps the enemies of his peace swept away health and property, children and friends, but still he held fast his integrity, coming out of the trial more firmly on God's side than ever.

And the source of his strength throughout was his firm faith in God —

“I know that my Vindicator is alive
And that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth:
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God.”

It is true to this hour that the strength of any life to do, to bear, to hold fast its course, will be in proportion to the fulness and clearness of its vision of God. The pure in heart do not see all things made plain; they do not understand the meaning of all phenomena, or the explanation of all perplexities, but they do see God. They endure many things which they do not understand because they see Him who does understand. They are sorely puzzled to know how all these inexplicable things are working together for good, but they see God and confide in him. And so they become as little children in the vast house of their Father, somewhat bewildered, as children commonly are by the mystery of their earthly father's larger interests, by the unexplained plans of the mother for the household, by the far-reaching purposes of both parents for the education of their own, and by the opposition and rebuke which sometimes confront their childish desires. But in the strength of this fuller vision of the character of God, men live on as children before him, and by that spirit enter into his kingdom to go no more out.

The author gives another fine touch in this closing chapter. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job,

when he prayed for his friends." Miserable comforters they had been: they had rubbed salt and vinegar in his wounds; they had beaten him with the dry bones of their dogma; they had suspected him of secret wickedness and had striven to break down his reputation for integrity.

And on his side Job had stoutly contended with them. He stood up and argued his case. He poured scorn upon their empty theories: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." But after the storm and the new vision of God, we find no more heated argument; no more hurling of theological anathemas back and forth. His heart went out to them in their stiff, blind, dull ignorance of the finer things of faith with a feeling of compassion, until he finally knelt down and prayed for them. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

He argued the case with them, for he was right and they were wrong. He denounced their theology, for it was erroneous and cruel; it ought to have been denounced. He resolutely maintained that a human being has rights which the Creator is bound to respect, and this is soundly true or else all moral companionship between man and his Maker would be at an end. But the argument accomplished little; it was when he prayed for them that the blessing came. In the moment of surrender and entreaty, in the act of outgoing compassion, the blessing came upon this weary, suffering heart.

There is a lesson wrapped up here for all those who fight the theological and philosophical battles of

the world. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have faith sufficient to move mountains and resolution enough to stand firm as a martyr, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, if I have not love. When all the arguments were over and all the theological knowledge had been displayed, Job's heart, melted by the new vision of God's own sympathetic interest in animate and in inanimate nature, went out to those harsh theologians in love. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

Argument has divided families, broken up friendships, warmed the hearts of men with anger rather than with affection, deepened misunderstandings. It has closed doors that were beginning to stand ajar to better things; it has created partizans grieving the Holy Spirit who is without prejudice; it has firmly established contestants in the conceit of their own ignorance, — all this argument has done. It is therefore true to the moral history of mankind that, not in the heat of argument, but in the quiet moments that follow the fuller vision of God, in the attitude and act of prayer, the restoration of Job took place.

But in a drama there should be some further *dénouement*. The author cannot as an artist leave his work at loose ends. In actual life it often seems as if there were no outcome, no fit conclusion; things do not all come out right in the last chapter. But this is because we have not yet read the last chapter. In the drama, however, the author must say what he has to say before he lays down his pen.

Therefore, contrary to the view of those critics who maintain that the last chapter of the book of Job is an addition by a later hand, I contend that it belongs with the rest. The author who could write such chapters as make up the body of the book is too great an artist not to bring his work to some kind of conclusion.

The reward of Job was threefold: first, in the gracious and cordial recognition of his fidelity by Jehovah. How the author loves to put upon the lips of the Lord over and over again, that affectionate designation, "my servant Job"! "The Lord said to Eliphaz, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as 'my servant Job' hath." "Therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to 'my servant Job,' and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering." "'My servant Job' shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for," he repeats, "ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as 'my servant Job' hath."

Over and over this loving designation — "My servant Job!" It looks back to the prologue where the Lord flung down a challenge to the Adversary, "Hast thou considered 'my servant Job,' that there is none like him in the earth, a sound, straight, God-fearing, evil-hating man?" And through all this troubled experience the author has made good the Lord's challenge. Job has indeed been the servant of the Most High, serving him not for pay, but because such service is right, because there is

nothing higher open to man than the reasonable service of God.

The author must bring out Job's vindication in the sight of his friends who had accused him of secret sin and had taunted him as one who had fallen under the displeasure of heaven. The reward therefore could not be postponed without doing violence to the demands of the drama. It is fitting, then, that in the presence of these very men the Lord should speak over and over of "my servant Job," and should make their own well-being depend on his intercession in their behalf.

The reward of Job's fidelity came also in restored temporal prosperity, — "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." His health was restored and he lived on serenely to a ripe old age. His prosperity was regained, and we find him with exactly twice as many sheep, oxen, and camels as before. He reared another family of ten children, and as before seven of them were sons, to the delight of his Oriental heart, and no daughters in all the land were so handsome as the daughters of Job. In this serene and satisfying prosperity he lived until death found him "old and full of days."

It need not have been so and it is not always so in real life. He might have died covered with leprosy, poor, childless, forlorn, even though he had maintained his integrity and had enjoyed a nobler vision of God. Good men, with their heroic faith corrected and purified by fiery trials nobly borne, do die without their temporal prosperity restored. To us there is not the shock in such an unfinished picture that

there would have been to the minds of those early men. Jesus Christ has brought the future world upon the map for us and made it a fact present to the consciousness of most God-fearing people as it was not to those men of old. In the presence of manifest injustice at the end of an earthly career, we instinctively turn to the world beyond in our thought. But to this writer in that far-off time the future life was not a familiar idea; it was suggested, but not affirmed. It is not named by "the Voice from the whirlwind," for the author dared not claim the divine sanction for his uncertain hope. The future life lying then in a haze of uncertainty, the reward of Job must be accomplished here, where all might see and where the author's steps are sure.

More than that the author would bear testimony to the principle that righteousness does tend toward temporal well-being. The three friends were mistaken in pressing it as such a hard and fast rule as to admit of no exception. The Psalmist had been young and now was old and he had never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread. His experience in the main is the experience of all men, but emergencies and disasters suspend the operation of this general rule. The tendency of all these processes appointed by a Moral Being for moral ends is to bring correspondence between circumstances and character. We only go astray when we press it in every instance and conclude that those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell because of bad masonry were sinners above all men in Jerusalem, or that the man was born blind for the sin of his parents, or that all

who suffer conspicuous misfortune, as did Job, must have been extraordinary sinners. The author, having made room for the exception and for a function of suffering which is not penal, now tells us that "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning," in order to indicate his confidence that the trend and tendency of righteousness is toward well-being in all its completeness. The kingdom of righteousness, sought in and for itself, will surely, sometime, somewhere, have all good things added in with it.

The reward came also in spiritual enrichment. "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" — sheep, oxen, camels — and twice as much also of something higher and more permanent. We find more character, more sympathy for men mistaken in their views, more spiritual insight, — in a word, more Job! He is twice the man he was! He was a sincere, straightforward, useful man, having heard of the deeper, finer things of spiritual life by the hearing of the ear, but now as he emerges from his hard experiences, his eye has seen them all and he knows the deep things of life by personal participation in them. He stands up with twice the spiritual efficiency for instructing the world's ignorance, for comforting its sorrows, for interceding on its behalf at the throne of grace.

Here we have the last great lesson of the book. It is a drama rather than a lyric poem. It is made up of action. Inasmuch as it is a Hebrew drama, the scene of action is the human soul, and the materials are taken from those inner values to which the Hebrews,

as a people chosen for their spiritual insight, have given such conspicuous attention. We not only hear questions discussed, we see them *lived out*. And the work of spiritual enlargement and enrichment in the principal figure of the drama really holds the center of the stage throughout; the greatest reward which Job won by his fidelity was in the fact that the Lord gave him twice as much of that deeper life which is eternal.

The problems connected with God's providential government of the world are not all solved. The questions as to why the wicked live and why the good suffer are not all answered. The complete returns which will enable us to give final answer to these inquiries are not yet in our hands. But those two greater questions referred to in the second chapter are answered. Can men trust God? They surely can, for his sympathetic interest includes the very foundations of the earth, the stars in their courses, the depths of the sea; it extends to all the frontiers of human knowledge and embraces all forms of animal life. Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is his, nothing forgotten, nothing unnoticed, nothing unutilized; and because all is his, he can be trusted to deal faithfully and lovingly with his own.

Can God trust men? Job answered this query; he made it plain that he was not serving God for pay, — he was serving him because God alone is worthy of supreme and complete allegiance. Whatever may be his lot, he will steadfastly serve God. Job knows how to abound and how to be abased; he will in either case hold fast his integrity and serve God.

THE STRANGE WAYS OF GOD

He is not thrown down, he is not turned aside, he is not beaten back by the sorest trial. He knows throughout that his Vindicator is alive, and that at the last he will be enabled to cry from a deeper experience, "Mine eye seeth thee." All that went before was the hearing of the ear, but now there is the open vision which enriches the heart of this tried and troubled servant of the Most High.

"He knoweth the way that I take;
When he hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold."

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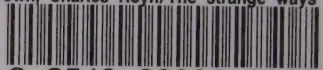

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